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of sides until the circumscribing square is reached, and the process repeats itself into a new circle around this new square, and so on. If instead of saying "alternate vertices etc.," suppose we say, reversal of the process which produces the circle from the circumscribed square by forcing the vertices inward until they evanesce on straight lines, the newly produced vertices being symmetrically arranged. This process kept up at an even speed of surface change sweeps the polygons through the circle, and, by reversal of the swelling process, into the inscribed square, and so on through a new cycle. In imagination we can see the polygons swelling into other polygons, the transition figure between the sets being the circle; as the parabola is the transition curve between the ellipse and the hyperbola. If we imagine the lines to be general lines of infinite length we can see the plane, initially crossed by the four bunches of lines, gradually becoming more and more crossed and re-crossed with lines, except the central portion which is more and more sharply delimited from the rest by the bounding polygon, which finally becomes a circle. As the process goes on we can see the lines coalescing again, the plane becoming less darkened until finally we arrive again at a square, and the process begins over again.

That we have no mechanism for producing these results is of no importance. Until 1864 we had no mechanism which would enlarge a circle into a straight line. Nor have we now any for sweeping the ellipse through its transition curve, the parabola, into the hyperbola.

To conform to all this, the narrow definition of polygon must be enlarged into a configuration of lines; a regular polygon as a symmetrical configuration, one phase of which is the circle, a regular configuration of an infinite number of lines.

A pregnant illustration of this idea is the historic problem of squaring the circle. In numbers this is impossible because  $\pi$ , among other reasons, is the limit of an infinite series of discrete terms. In geometry, with a ruler and compass, the length of the circumference is also the limit of an infinite series of operations and is therefore unattainable. But change the process by using the integrator, and what was before a limit and just out of reach becomes attainable, and we get a straight line equal in length to the circumference.

ARTHUR LATHAM BAKER.

MANUAL TRAINING HIGH SCHOOL, BROOKLYN, N. Y.

#### A MOSLEM ACCOUNT AS TO THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTIAN SECTS IN SYRIA.

*To the Editor of The Monist.*

The account of Christianity in the work of Shahrastání discussed in *The Monist* of January last, more especially the concluding paragraph (p. 122 inf.),

alluding to three chief sects of Christians in Syria, reminds me of a certain extract from Mirkhond (Mirkhavand), which somewhat puzzles me, and which no one to whom I have applied here has been inclined or able to explain to my satisfaction.

I offer a translation from the Persian original (*Raudat-al-safá*, or "Garden of Purity," Book I) without any commentary, leaving it to you what use you will make of it. I have tried to follow the original as closely as possible, especially in the characteristic terms, among which "the God of the earth"—*khuddái-zamin*—has rather a strange sound....

The passage reads as follows:

"OF YÚNUS THE JEW LEADING ASTRAY THE CHRISTIANS.

"According to Khamdín-ibn-'Abbás the followers of Jesus remained on the sacred path for eighty years after his ascension. Then Yúnus the Jew led them away into the valley of error and unbelief.

"It happened in this wise:

"Yúnus the Jew came among the Christians wearing a hermit's or monk's gown. Four months did he stay at the house of a pious Christian, showing to no one his unblest face. His devout life produced great confidence among the Christians, and when, after that period, he said, 'Send me three of your learned men, in whom you place perfect confidence, that I may lay a divine secret before each of them separately,' they sent to him Nestor and Yakúb and Malek.

"And in private he said to one of them, 'I am a messenger of Christ to the people, to lighten the burden of their hearts on account of (*sic*!) his word.' And further he said, 'Do you know that Jesus restored life to the dead, and did such and such things?' The learned man replied: 'Aye.' Then Yúnus asked him, 'Could any one but God do such things?' He said, 'No.' Yúnus said, 'Know then for certain, that Jesus is the Providence of that world, who came down from heaven, and having borne his earthly lot to the end, went back to heaven.'

"To the second learned man he said, privately, 'Are you aware that the Lord Jesus performed such acts as no one but the Lord Creator could have done?' The other assented. Yúnus said, 'Do you know that the Lord Jesus is sinless?' He said, 'Aye.' Yúnus said, 'Then you ought to believe that Jesus is the son of God, who sent him to the earth and took him up again into heaven.'

"And with the third sage, again in private, he spoke similar words, saying, 'He is the God of the earth, who, when men intended to kill him, was concealed, and who will shortly return among the people. I have been sent to bring these tidings.'

"Having communicated to them such false doctrine, he went into the oratory, where he locked himself in. But that very night he went the way

to hell. And on the morrow, when the Christians inquired from the three learned men what Yúnus spoke to them, each of them had a different message from the other two. So the people said, 'We had better hear Yúnus himself.' And they went and burst open the door of the oratory and found that Yúnus had been killed. And the Christians were divided into three sects, each one adopting one of the three before-mentioned creeds."

H. WERNEKKE.

WEIMAR, GERMANY, February 27, 1905.

#### EDITORIAL COMMENT.

It appears that the communication of Professor Wernekke, ultimately based upon the report of Khamdin-ibn-'Abbás, is the ancient Moslem view as to the origin of Christian sects. According to Mohammed, Jesus was born of a virgin, and is the greatest prophet of past ages, but the Christians are accused of misinterpreting the doctrine of their leader. Among other things it is claimed that Jesus when speaking of the Comforter who would come and initiate Christians into the truth (John xv. 26) referred to Mohammed; for they claim that the Greek word *παρακλητος* (i. e., Comforter) is but a corruption of *παρακλυτος* (i. e., the Renowned One) which is the meaning of the name Mohammed. The present account is characteristic of the Moslem view. It assumes that the primitive Christians were Christ's true followers, but that their faith was perverted by a scheming villain, and even in the Orient the odium of heresy is laid at the door of the Jews.

P. C.